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Winter 12-20-2018

# Effect of Music and Movement on Recognition of Sight Words of Kindergarten Students

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EFFECT OF MUSIC AND MOVEMENT ON SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION  
OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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## **Chapter One**

### **Research Problem**

Successful readers use a variety of strategies and tools to help them understand text. “One of the most effective and powerful reading tools that parents and teachers can help children develop is sight word recognition” (Miles, Rubin, & Gonzales-Frey, 2017). When a child is able to identify sight words, he is on his way to becoming a fluent reader. Sight words are critical to reading not only because 75% of all texts are made up of the same 100 words, but because many of them cannot be easily decoded. Because of this, readers need to be able to quickly identify or recognize these words on sight. In fact, when a reader “masters sight words, she is able to understand at least half of the words in a particular text” (Taylor, 2015).

Traditional teaching is focused on recitation; students sit in silence, take turns reciting the lesson, and wait to be called upon. Progressive educational practices focus more on students’ needs rather than assume that all students are on the same level of understanding, or that they are able to learn in the same way (Teaching methods, 2017). “The traditional “chalk and talk” method of teaching that’s persisted for hundreds of years is not acquiring inferior results. Greater student interaction is encouraged, the boundaries of authority are being broken down, and a focus on enjoyment over grades is emphasized” (Teaching methods, 2017).

When students participate in music and movement, they are developing small motor skills, large motor skills, learning to express emotions, and improving balance and coordination. Using movement in the classroom also increases a students’ ability to focus. According to Educational Playcare, using music and movement in the classroom “integrates physical, cognitive, social, and

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emotional learning domains for a whole-child approach to learning” (Benefit of music & movement, 2017).

There is a significant amount of research regarding the importance of sight word recognition, as well as the benefits of using music and movement in the classroom. However, there is not a lot of research proving the effects that music and movement can have specifically on sight word recognition of kindergarten students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect that music and movement has specifically on sight word recognition of beginning readers in kindergarten. This study will investigate how using music and movement can impact students’ recognition of sight words.

### Subjects

**Description of subjects.** The participants in this study are kindergarten students from two separate kindergarten classrooms.

**Selection criteria.** Prior to the beginning of the school year, kindergarten students will be randomly placed in kindergarten classrooms. One classroom (control group) of kindergarten students will be taught sight words using traditional methods such as reading it, writing it, and building it with manipulatives. The control group will not be exposed to the songs throughout the duration of the study. The other classroom (experimental group) will use music and movement to teach sight words to students. The maximum number of participants for each classroom is 24 students.

### Setting

**Description of setting.** Participants in this study are kindergarten students at Robert Asp Elementary. Robert Asp is a Title I school in Moorhead, Minnesota. Robert Asp Elementary is

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part of the Moorhead Area Public Schools school district. This district is made up of four elementary schools, two (connected) middle schools and one high school.

The student population is diverse and includes students from a homeless shelter within the school's zone. This has created a transient population. 67% of students are Caucasian, 13% of students are from Hispanic/Latino origins, 5% of students are American Indian, 1% of students are from Asian origins, 6% are African American and 8% of students are from two or more races. 53% of students qualify for free or reduced lunches and 5% of students are homeless.

Students at Robert Asp Elementary have a wide variety of learning abilities. 21.7% of students receive Special Education Services and 6.8% of students are English Language Learners.

**Informed consent.** Permission for this study will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Minnesota State University Moorhead. Permission will also be obtained from Moorhead Area Public Schools (including the Superintendent and Principal) to conduct this study.

Protection of human subjects participating in this study will be assured. Guardians of participants will be informed of the purpose of this research and procedures. This includes disclosure of risks and/or benefits. Guardians will sign permission forms, allowing their child to participate in this study, as all students are under the age of eighteen. Confidentiality will be protected by using numbers assigned to each student instead of their names. Participants and their guardians will have the choice to withdraw at any time. These procedures will be outlined in writing.

## Review of Literature

### Definition of Terms.

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Sight words: frequently used and repeated words in the English language through text

### **Sight Words in Kindergarten**

Sight words are words that are frequently used in print. 75% of words that are used in beginning children's literature are sight words (Taylor, 2015). There are a variety of sight word lists for every grade level. Each of these sets of lists builds upon another. These words cannot be "sounded out" because they do not follow basic phonics rules. Students must be able to automatically recognize these words to become fluent readers (Myers, n.d.). As Myers explains, there are several benefits of teaching sight words. If a child begins to read a book and can already recognize some words, the child will have confidence to continue reading. Sight words also help promote reading comprehension. (Myers, n.d.) Taylor (2015) also noted the importance of sight word recognition by stating that "limited word recognition and fluency are the probable causes of young readers' lack of comprehension" (Taylor, 2015). Instead of having to figure out what every word means, children can put their attention on words and concepts they are not familiar with.

According to Taylor (2015), young readers can acquire sight words in a variety of ways. Students can "play" with words in games, rhymes, and songs, write or dictate their own texts, engage in repeated readings of familiar books, read texts that use sight words frequently, and engage in shared writing sessions. Miles, Rubin, & Gonzales-Frey (2017) found that kindergarten students are typically in the partial alphabetic phase of reading, in which beginning readers use the most salient sounds and letters in the words to read and spell. These students may be less able to retain sight words in memory when taught using flashcards, word lists, or even in context; all of which are traditional teaching methods in kindergarten classrooms (Miles, Rubin, & Gonzalez-Frey, 2017).

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### **Effect of Movement in the Classroom**

Studies show that active students have better focus, quicker cognitive processing and more successful memory retention than students that sit still for the majority of the day (Abdelbary, 2017). Abdelbary (2017) states that “movement increases blood and oxygen flow, which positively affects cognitive development, physical health and mental well-being”. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2008), children and adolescents should get 60 minutes or more of physical activity daily. To meet this recommendation, the CDC encourages schools to build activity into classroom lessons (2008). Evidence shows that exercise enhances cognitive processing and supports the connection between movement and learning (Jensen, 2005).

Children learn best through active involvement (Pica, 2010). Even though most early childhood professionals are aware of the cognitive benefits of movement, with the focus on accountability and testing, Pica (2010) warns that movement is in danger of disappearing in schools. In contrast, Jensen believes that the “sit still and listen” method of teaching is one of the main reasons high needs students are not able to be in regular schools (Jensen, 2005). In *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*, Jensen (2005) suggests that when movement is a natural part of the school day, it will influence the brains of all students. “Regularly-scheduled movement breaks throughout the day and movement used within and between lessons results in better-behaved, more engaged students who can more easily focus on and retain what they are supposed to be learning” (Jensen, 2005).

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### **Effect of Music in the Literacy Classroom**

Recent research has found a connection between music and language and support of using songs to teach reading skills (Besson, Chobert, & Marie, 2011). Similarly, Standley (2008) found that music interventions were related to reading achievements and that music activities that included reading skills had stronger effects compared to activities that did not. Although some studies have found significant effects on pre-reading skills (Standley, 2008), these studies haven't examined the effects of music programs on reading achievement specifically. Overy (2003), found that lessons based on singing increased spelling skills, but not reading.

Watson's study concluded that "learning to read can be enhanced by using songs and movement to teach children to read, especially if the first words that children learn are words they already know as lyrics in a song" (Watson, 2014). He goes on to suggest that the use of songs may facilitate long-term memory processes. Students are able to easily remember songs, and therefore, words, after just a few repetitions. (Watson, 2014)

### **Hypothesis Statement**

There will be a positive correlation between music and movement and sight word recognition of kindergarten students.



## Chapter Two

### Research Questions

As a kindergarten teacher, I realize the importance of students' ability to recognize sight words, as well as using a variety of teaching methods. I also understand that parental involvement and home life has an impact on a child's education. Because of this, I have developed the following research questions:

RQ 1: How does music and movement effect sight word recognition of kindergarten students?

RQ 2: How does parental involvement effect sight word recognition of kindergarten students?

By answering these questions, I will be able to identify sources of growth as well as barriers to students' ability to recognize sight words.

### Methods

**Methods and rationale.** Teachers will use a district-wide sight word recognition list to assess students. This assessment is completed in October, November, December, February, March and May. All kindergarten teachers in the district use this common assessment, making this a reliable assessment. This assessment will be used to understand the impact of music and movement on sight word recognition. Teachers simply show students sight words and record which sight words the student was able to recognize. Content validity is good, as this district-wide list was created by task-force of teachers and curriculum experts. It is used across the district and provides teachers with data to analyze throughout the school year. Kindergarten students should be able to recognize 50 out of 58 sight words by the end of the school year.

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Students will have a sight word book to take home each time a new sight word is learned. Parents will initial the book and return to school to document parent involvement.

**Schedule.** Teachers will begin sight word instruction on the first week of school. Kindergarten students will be taught two new sight words per week. The control group classroom teacher will instruct students without using music or movement. Students will read, write, and manipulate sight words throughout the week. The experimental group classroom teacher will instruct students using music (HeidiSongs DVD program) and movement. Movement will happen before, within, and after the lessons. Students may engage in jumping jacks, sit ups, push ups, etc. while saying or whispering the spelling of the sight word, or may engage in movement breaks before and/or after learning the new sight words. The HeidiSongs DVD program also incorporates movement while using music to teach new sight words.

Both teachers will use the district-wide sight word assessment to collect data on sight word recognition of their students. This will be completed every two weeks for the duration of the study. Parents will complete a home survey and will receive a sight word booklet for students to practice at home. Data from the home survey will be collected every three weeks for the duration of the study.

**Ethical issues.** Schedule limitations may impact the ability for the classroom teachers to remain on the same schedule as the other. Outside factors may impact a students' ability to recognize sight words, such as, behavior, learning needs, home support and students leaving the classroom during instruction for specialized services. These factors could alter the results of the study.

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**Anticipated response.** If any of the above ethical issues occur, the researcher will handle them appropriately. Guardians will only be given information regarding their student and conferences will be available for guardians to have full disclosure on the progress of their student. Students are able to opt out of the study at any point and will receive the same instruction as their peers.

### Chapter Three

#### Description of Data

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of music and movement on the recognition of sight words of kindergarten students. This study gathered data using a sight word checklist (district wide assessment). By December, students should be able to recognize 12 sight words. The researcher collected data three times during the duration of the study from each kindergarten class. Assessments were collected every two weeks. After completing the sight word checklist with each student, the researcher collected and analyzed the data.

#### Participant Data

Twenty-one students (nine male and twelve female) from the experimental group participated in this study. Twenty-two students (11 male and 11 female) from the control group participated in this study. All participants received sight word instruction daily. Students were taught two new sight words each week. The researcher identified participants using a letter and number. Student “E1” was in the experimental group and “C1” was in the control group.

## Results

### Research Question 1: How does music and movement effect sight word recognition of kindergarten students?

The researcher conducted the sight word assessment three times throughout the duration of the study with each the experimental and control group. The results indicated in Table 1 display the results from each assessment for the experimental group. Table 2 displays the results from each assessment for the control group. According to the results, thirteen out of twenty-one students (62%) in the experimental group were able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3. Eleven out of twenty-two students in the control group (50%) were able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3.

Table 1

#### *Sight Word Assessment Checklist, Experimental Group*

Participant	Sight Word Assessment 1	Sight Word Assessment 2	Sight Word Assessment 3
E1	0	6	12
E2	0	4	11
E3	0	8	12
E4	2	8	12
E5	0	3	5
E6	0	6	12
E7	1	4	10
E8	3	8	12

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E9	2	7	12
E10	0	3	9
E11	1	5	12
E12	0	2	6
E13	0	2	4
E14	1	4	9
E15	0	5	12
E16	2	6	12
E17	1	7	12
E18	0	8	12
E19	2	8	12
E20	3	8	12
E21	0	3	7

Table 2

*Sight Word Assessment Checklist, Control Group*

Participant	Sight Word Assessment 1	Sight Word Assessment 2	Sight Word Assessment 3
C1	0	4	7
C2	1	5	9
C3	0	7	12
C4	0	3	8

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C5	2	8	12
C6	0	3	7
C7	2	6	12
C8	1	5	12
C9	0	6	10
C10	1	3	7
C11	0	2	6
C12	3	6	12
C13	2	5	9
C14	0	4	12
C15	0	6	12
C16	1	5	12
C17	0	3	5
C18	0	4	12
C19	3	8	12
C20	2	6	10
C21	0	2	5
C22	4	8	12

**Research Question 2: How does parental involvement effect sight word recognition of kindergarten students?**

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Parental involvement was also assessed throughout the study. Each time a new sight word was learned, sight word books would be sent home with both the experimental and control groups. Parents were expected to read with their child, initial the book, and send it back in their child's book bag. Once the researcher recorded the data, the book was sent home to stay. This allowed the researcher to collect data on how many parents were actively involved in their child's sight word instruction and recognition. By the end of the study, parents should have initialed twelve sight word books. Table 3 indicates how many sight word books were initialed by parents of each student of the experimental group. Table 4 indicates how many sight word books were initialed by parents of each student of the control group. Each table also indicates the total number of sight words each student was able to recognize. This allowed the researcher to compare the effect of parental involvement on the students' recognition of sight words.

According to the results, two out of twenty-one students (9.5%) returned initialed sight word books all twelve times in the experimental group. Both students were able to recognize all twelve sight words. Seven out of twenty-one students (33%) returned nine or more initialed sight word books and were able to recognize 11-12 sight words. Fourteen out of twenty-one students (66%) returned less than nine initialed sight word books. Of those fourteen students, seven (50%) were able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3.

According to the control group results, four out of twenty two students (18%) returned initialed sight word books all twelve times. All four of these students were able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3. Ten out of twenty-two students (45%) returned nine or more initialed sight word books and were able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3. Twelve out of twenty-two students (55%) returned less than nine

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initialed sight word books. Of those twelve, one student (.8%) was able to recognize all twelve sight words on Sight Word Assessment 3.

Table 3

*Parental Involvement, Experimental Group*

Participant	Sight Word Books Initialed	Sight Word Assessment 3
E1	10	12
E2	11	11
E3	7	12
E4	12	12
E5	1	5
E6	8	12
E7	7	10
E8	8	12
E9	10	12
E10	4	9
E11	9	12
E12	0	6
E13	0	4
E14	1	9
E15	5	12
E16	6	12



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E17	12	12
E18	9	12
E19	8	12
E20	7	12
E21	3	7

Table 4

*Parental Involvement, Control Group*

Participant	Sight Word Books Initialed	Sight Word Assessment 3
C1	3	7
C2	4	9
C3	10	12
C4	2	8
C5	12	12
C6	1	7
C7	12	12
C8	9	12
C9	4	10
C10	1	7
C11	2	6
C12	8	12

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C13	5	9
C14	11	12
C15	12	12
C16	10	12
C17	1	5
C18	9	12
C19	11	12
C20	3	10
C21	0	5
C22	12	12

**Conclusions/Implications**

Educators frequently learn about and search for effective and efficient strategies for literacy instruction. The results from this study provided educators with data regarding the effect of music and movement on sight word instruction, specifically. Possible implications include: students' exposure to sight words prior to their kindergarten experience, students' exposure to pre-school prior to their kindergarten experience, parental involvement and specific learning disabilities impacting their ability to recognize sight words.

According to the Sight Word Assessments, students in the experimental group benefited from learning new sight words through music and movement. According to the parental involvement component of this study, parental involvement impacted sight word recognition.

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Overall, the findings of this study prove that using music and movement have a positive effect on kindergarten students' and their ability to recognize sight words.

### **Chapter Four**

#### **Action Plan**

After the completion of this study and noting the effectiveness of using music and movement to teach sight words to kindergarten students, I plan to use this information to modify my own instructional practices. Instead of using traditional methods (read, write, manipulate, etc.) only, I will incorporate music and movement into my daily instruction of sight words.

This study focused mainly on the recognition of sight words after learning new sight words through music and movement. In the future, I hope to do more research on parent involvement and how it impacts a student academically. I will continue to use a parent communication tool to monitor home involvement with sight words.

### **Chapter Five**

#### **Plan for Sharing**

I plan on sharing my research with my grade level team. As a team, we meet weekly, as well as in our professional learning communities during professional development. I will present my findings to my team and assist them in any way that I can. I will also share my results with my building administrators. While sharing these results, it will be important to find funding to be able to purchase more DVDs for our grade level to have access to. If funding becomes difficult, I will share my results with members of our parent-teacher community to see if funding would be available through their committee. I plan on also sharing these results with kindergarten teachers

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throughout the district. As a district, we meet monthly and have an opportunity to have discussions as a grade level. I will share my findings and give my contact information so that other teachers can find out more information. While presenting my findings, a lot of discussion will take place. This will allow for more collaboration, with a lot of teachers/administrators offering a different view. This collaboration may result in a more succinct approach across the district to teaching sight words, which will benefit all students and provide for an easy transition as students move within the district. Through this collaboration, teachers will be able to modify their own teaching strategies to help fit the needs of their learners and provide effective sight word instruction.

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